



WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH IN HAWAII



*From The
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health*

State Profile 2002

*Delivering on the Nation's promise:
Safety and health at work for all people through prevention.*

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

NIOSH is the primary federal agency responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related illness and injury. NIOSH is located in the Department of Health and Human Services in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The NIOSH mission is to provide national and world leadership to prevent work-related illness, injury, disability, and death by gathering information, conducting scientific research, and translating the knowledge gained into products and services. As part of its mission, NIOSH supports programs in every state to improve the health and safety of workers. NIOSH has developed this document to highlight recent NIOSH programs important to workers and employers in Hawaii.

The Burden of Occupational Illness and Injury in Hawaii

- In Hawaii, there are approximately 570,000 individuals employed in the workforce.¹
- In 2000, 20 workers died as a result of workplace injuries.²
- In 1999, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate of fatal workplace injuries was 5.5 deaths per 100,000 workers—above the national average rate of 4.5 deaths per 100,000 workers.²
- In 2000, there were 25,700 nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses in Hawaii.³

The Cost of Occupational Injury and Illness in Hawaii

In 2000, the most recent year for which data are available, a total of \$231.4 million was paid for workers' compensation claims by Hawaii private insurers, self-insured employers, and state funds.⁴ This figure does not include compensation paid to workers employed by the Federal government and also underestimates the total financial burden for private sector businesses, since only a fraction of health care costs and earnings lost through work injuries and illnesses is covered by workers' compensation. Chronic occupational illnesses like cancer are substantially under-reported in workers' compensation systems because work-relatedness is often difficult to establish.

How NIOSH Prevents Worker Injuries and Diseases in Hawaii

Health Hazard Evaluations (HHEs) and Technical Assistance

NIOSH evaluates workplace hazards and recommends solutions when requested by employers, workers, or state or federal agencies. Since 1993, NIOSH has responded to nine requests for HHEs in Hawaii in a variety of industrial settings, including the following example:

Honolulu, Hawaii: Tuberculosis

In 1999, at the request of the Hawaii State Department of Health, NIOSH personnel visited the Lanakila Health Center Tuberculosis (TB) Clinic, to evaluate the clinic's TB prevention program and review proposed design changes intended to make it a model clinic. The NIOSH evaluation included a ventilation assessment, measurement of ultraviolet radiation emitted by germicidal lamps, respirator fit testing, a review of proposed ventilation and clinic layout changes, a review of the employee tuberculin skin test data, and employee interviews. Investigators recommended following guidelines by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to improve the usefulness of employee TB skin test data and providing periodic training on TB, respirators, and UV radiation for employees. In addition, the facility should maintain sputum rooms under negative pressure and provide sufficient space for case consultations.

Building State Capacity

State-Based Surveillance

NIOSH funds the Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance Program (ABLES) in the Hawaii Department of Health. Through ABLES, the agency's staff track and respond to cases of excessive lead exposure in adults which can cause a variety of adverse health outcomes such as kidney or nervous system damage and potential infertility.

Extramural Programs Funded by NIOSH

The following is an example of recent training grants funded by NIOSH in the state of Hawaii.

University of Hawaii at Hilo

In fiscal year 2001, NIOSH started funding an undergraduate interdisciplinary program based in the Department of Psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences, University of Hawaii at Hilo. Through the program, students in nursing, chemistry, and psychology will be able to attend four newly developed courses and graduate with a minor in occupational health and safety. Activities during the first year of funding included the development of course work, addition of specialist faculty, and partnering with public and private regional agencies with an interest in occupational safety and health. Students will be admitted to classes in fiscal year 2002.

Additional information regarding NIOSH services and activities can be accessed through the NIOSH home page at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html> or by calling the NIOSH 800-number at 1-800-356-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674).

¹U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2000.

²DOL, BLS in cooperation with state and federal agencies, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1999-2000.

³DOL, BLS in cooperation with participating state agencies, Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, 2000.

⁴National Academy of Social Insurance, *Workers' Compensation: Benefits, Coverage, and Costs, 2000 New Estimates*, May 2002.